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ABSTRACT

Reflecting 18 months of work by the Preservation and Access Committee established by the Council on Library Resources in June 1984, these reports identify the essential elements of a national brittle book preservation program and propose an organizational structure and funding plan. Following a brief introduction, the Report of the Committee on Preservation and Access summarizes the brittle book problem; offers some general observations on the fundamental issues and essential characteristics of an effective national program for book preservation; recommends the establishment of an organizational structure that will assist and support the libraries directly involved in the program; and discusses the development and promotion of a funding plan. Forum III--A Summary Report, which was developed as a result of a meeting convened to review the work of the Committee on Preservation and Access, includes general observations as well as recommendations for establishing a national program, implementing the program, and funding and incentives. A listing of Forum III participants is also provided. Appendices include the Committee on Preservation and Access Interim Report and an annotated listing of 13 committee background studies. A listing of members of the committee is also provided. (KM)

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# Brittle Books

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## Reports of the Committee on Preservation and Access

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# Brittle Books

Reports of the Committee on
Preservation and Access

Council on Library Resources
Washington, D.C.
1986

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# *Introduction*

The reports included in this publication reflect the work of the Preservation and Access Committee over a period of eighteen months. They also cap a series of events that began in December 1982 with Forum I, a meeting of librarians, faculty, and university and foundation officers who were asked to consider the changing character of research libraries and the future needs of their users. The subject of preservation was one of the principal topics introduced at that meeting. During the intervening time of somewhat more than three years, attention to preservation has steadily increased. Each year additional libraries and archives become actively involved, and a growing number of individuals are at work in this important arena. The true nature of the preservation problem has also come into sharper focus; preservation has many aspects, each requiring attention of a specific kind. Examples include greater use of acid-free paper in new publications, conservation of important books and manuscripts, attention to storage conditions, deacidification of books and other materials, research into the durability of information stored on computer tape or optical disk, and training of technical specialists.

Forum II, held in October 1983, concentrated on the national and regional aspects of collecting and preserving library materials, and specified several matters for prompt attention. At the request of participants, the Council on Library Resources agreed to take the lead in getting work under way and subsequently proposed to library and academic organizations that a Committee on Preservation be formed and assigned the tasks of devising the management structure, outlining a funding plan, and setting the characteristics of and conditions for a national program. Necessary funding for the work of the Committee was provided by the Exxon Education Foundation, and the Committee itself began to take shape in June of 1984. Billy E. Frye, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost of the University of Michigan, agreed to serve as chairman.

One of the most persistent and complicated elements of the preservation problem concerns "brittle books," the shorthand term for past publications produced on acid paper and now so deteriorated that they must be reproduced in some form or eventually they will be lost. The task of finding a reasonable way to deal with brittle books was assumed by the Committee, appropriately renamed the Committee on Preservation and Access to reflect the true nature of its assignment. The report that follows (with the Interim Report included as an appendix) identifies the essential elements of a brittle

book preservation program and proposes an organizational structure suited to the task.

The conclusions reached by the Committee were considered in detail by the thirty-four individuals who took part in Forum III on March 19-21, 1986, at Wye Plantation. The participants included not only most members of the Committee itself but representatives from nineteen organizations that have indicated support for the brittle books program, as well as several members of the new Commission on Preservation and Access that will assume operating responsibility in the future. A summary of the discussion that took place follows the Committee's report.

In a real sense, the meeting marked an end of basic planning and the beginning of a new period of action. Much hard work lies ahead. While some might view the concentration by the Committee on the matter of brittle books as limiting in the context of all of preservation, the fact is that by focusing on that topic, a remarkable opportunity has emerged — one that shows promise of fostering constructive collaboration among universities and one that will ultimately test the promise of technology as a means for storing and expediting equitable access to information. That same opportunity will also measure the willingness of many libraries and universities to deal finally with the brittle books problem, and will challenge the abilities and vision of the individuals who are part of those institutions.

The work of shaping an agenda for action and proposing the means to carry it out has been, in good part, accomplished. The work of turning plans into reality is now under way. The first meeting of the new Preservation and Access Commission is scheduled for late April, 1986. Funding is being sought for the operation of the Commission itself over three or four years; staffing needs are under consideration; an initial agenda is being outlined; and the magnitude of the job to be done is being further defined. A complementary National Advisory Council on Preservation is being formed and the many organizations that will take part in the work of that Council are now hearing about the substance of Forum III from their representatives.

The participants at Wye reflected for a time on the many examples of recent progress — training programs for preservation specialists, important cooperative microfilming projects, research on technical applications, analytical studies to learn more of the costs and magnitude of the preservation problem, a growing international interest, public information projects, the creation of new microfilming facilities, and the promotion of standards for permanent book paper. The endorsement of the work of the Preservation and Access Committee and the prompt action to put the proposed management structure in place for a long and difficult undertaking expands that list of accomplishments. The messages from Forum III are that preserving, in a useful way, a substantial portion of our intellectual heritage is clearly worth the effort and that the time has come to proceed with the work.

# *Report Of The Committee On Preservation And Access*

## The Brittle Books Problem

The human record, in every form, is fragile. Ancient civilizations are reconstructed from fragments; the work of even the most distinguished authors is often scattered and lost; published and archival records of governments, institutions, and organizations tend to lose integrity and utility with time. New formats for information storage, whether magnetic or photographic, are not immune from their own set of hazards. In short, permanence is a relative term and preservation of the record of the past, on even the most selective basis, is a continuing process.

Books have, for centuries, been the principal means for carrying the past to the future and even in the computer era they remain a remarkably useful invention. Like all other media, books are fragile, but the printing of books in editions and the dispersion of copies has compensated for the hazards that face individual volumes. When a single copy is lost, another can usually be located. Even now, books printed three hundred or four hundred years ago, often in very small editions, can still be found in multiple copies.

The assurance implicit in duplication is less comforting, however, for many books printed after 1850. All paper, and thus every book, deteriorates over time. The rate of deterioration varies greatly and is a function of such factors as the chemical characteristics of the paper, the mechanical construction of the volume, storage conditions, and intensity of use. The paper most often used for books manufactured since the mid-nineteenth century tends to be acidic and, for that reason, less stable and durable than earlier, alkaline paper. Careful analytical work undertaken in several leading libraries confirms that books printed on acidic paper begin to deteriorate rapidly fifty years or so after publication.

Because of the size and composition of their collections, old, large, general research libraries are especially hard hit, but no library of record is immune. Typically, one-fourth of the volumes in such libraries are described as brittle—that is, the paper breaks after one or two double folds of a page corner. Further, up to 80 percent of the books in those collections are acid and, without

preventive action, eventually all will become brittle. The Library of Congress estimates that 77,000 volumes in its collection move from the "endangered" to the "brittle" category each year.

The problem, overwhelming as it already is, is unlikely to be contained in the near term. The great majority of books published, nationally and internationally, are still on acid paper. While standards for permanent and durable book paper have been set, their acceptance by leading commercial publishers is slow in the U.S. and even less visible abroad. It is difficult to interest the papermaking industry in the cause of preservation, since only a very small portion of paper made in the United States is used in books.

There is no absolute solution to the preservation problem and no single approach to follow. Use of more acid-free paper, worldwide, will bring long-term help. Deacidification of existing books while they are still physically sound will slow deterioration and extend their useful life. Many individual volumes of intrinsic value (e.g., those with important marginal notes; those that are exceptional examples of bookmaking) should be safeguarded as artifacts. But for the greatest portion of books that are already brittle, reproduction of content is the only realistic course of action; otherwise, an important segment of the human record will be lost forever. How this might best be done is the subject of this report.

## General Observations

Committee members considered many aspects of preservation, but concentrated especially on identifying the fundamental issues and the essential characteristics of an effective national undertaking. The starting point was to understand better the magnitude of the brittle books problem. Several research libraries have independently surveyed their collections and others have determined costs of at least some aspects of microfilming and other replication methods, but there has been no comprehensive study of the magnitude, costs, and benefits of a comprehensive program. Robert Hayes was asked to assemble and analyze known information and to provide estimates where needed, in order to reach a reasonable assessment of the dimension of the brittle books problem. His conclusion, based on saving only one-third of the titles now at risk (or to become at risk in the next twenty years) was that $384 million would be required to preserve the content of 3.3 million volumes. (Because so much data concerning costs, duplication of titles among libraries, and benefits are questionable or lacking, Hayes is now engaged in a research project that will provide more facts and new evaluation.)

Despite the inadequacy of much of the basic information, the inescapable fact for the Committee was the great size of the problem and the high cost of

a solution. While the cause of preservation alone might justify the effort and expense, it was the recognition that assured access to the most important publications produced over 150 years of history is the true objective and the real justification for a national program. The goal of brittle books preservation is not to reconstitute the collection of each library as it now is, but to create, in effect, a new national library of preserved materials. With that assertion as a base, the Committee went on to establish and encourage action on key program requirements.

- Wide understanding of the preservation problem is necessary if sufficient and continuing financial and institutional support is to be secured.

  With this objective in mind, several Committee members have taken part in academic and library meetings, the Interim Report has been widely distributed, and an hour-long film on preservation has been commissioned for possible use on public television and for distribution to many kinds of audiences nationally. Ultimate responsibility for building and maintaining an informed body of supporters rests with many library, archival, and academic organizations.

- Preservation work should employ the most effective technology available at any given time.

  The work of preservation cannot wait for the "ideal" technology. Production of microfilm copies of text done to established archival standards is still the accepted approach. Preservation is labor-intensive, and there seems little prospect that alternate technologies will reduce initial costs. Prospects are good that optical/digital disk replication systems may offer cost and service advantages in terms of producing, on demand, copies of individual titles, given fully acceptable assurances of the stability and permanence of such disks. It does seem essential that attention be paid to converting master copies of text from one format to another (film to disk, for example), should that prove desirable.

  Given the projected costs and the continuing requirement for program credibility, preservation work must be carried out as economically as possible, in line with realistic qualitative standards. (A detailed study of microfilming practices and procedures is now under way to determine whether personnel costs might be reduced without unduly compromising the quality of microform master copies.)

- An efficient bibliographic system is required.

  Given the dispersion of preservation work, the underlying bibliographic record system must provide accurate and timely information,

identifying and locating master copies. The bibliographic system can also be the source of management information for those concerned with the level, distribution, and characteristics of preservation activity. The same bibliographic information must be widely and easily available if the requirements for accessibility are to be met. A review of policies and procedures of the primary bibliographic services indicates that the structure for effective bibliographic control is essentially in place. Ways to make records for existing master copies of film more generally available are being considered. Bibliographic reporting of current preservation work seems improved, but more timely distribution of such reports nationwide is needed.

- Preservation priorities need additional consideration.

The Committee considered the topic of preservation priorities but reached no specific conclusions, perhaps because there are so many items and categories of obvious importance. In the end, items to be replicated will be identified by subject and preservation specialists working in many libraries and archives. The goals and priorities of those individuals (and their institutions) must be known and subject to review by scholars, research faculty, and an informed public. It is anticipated that priorities will become apparent rather than being imposed. Many factors will be influential: copyright constraints, unit costs, present condition, anticipated demand, and personal interests. The key to success over time seems to be the thoughtful involvement in the selection process of a large number of informed individuals. There is much that will never be preserved, simply because time will run out. There is also much that is not worth the cost and effort of preservation. It seems probable that the matter of priority will be resolved by the evidence of action. It seems less important to assign ranks of importance from the top down than it is to put aside for now the items and categories that are unlikely to meet the test of time.

- Systematic and purposeful collaboration is essential.

The brittle books problem will not be solved by accident. The scale is too great, the cost too large, and the setting too complex. A joining of forces, not unlike that which has characterized the gradual development of a comprehensive and standardized bibliographic system, is needed. More than anything else, the projected cost of preservation demands program efficiency and credibility. Targets must be realistic, results visible, and benefits unquestioned. Even though the work will be done cooperatively, success in preservation will be dependent on the performance of each institution. Ideally, the program to preserve brittle books should improve the methods and enhance the principles of effective collabo-

ration among libraries and research institutions, for while they are individually distinctive, they have a common cause.

## Organization

Meeting the conditions for success requires action on two fronts—establishing an organizational structure that will assist and support the libraries directly involved, and developing and promoting a funding plan.

In the final analysis, the work of preservation must be done by the individuals and institutions responsible for building and safeguarding the collections that, taken together, *are* our primary record. Meeting that responsibility is difficult because the present is always more demanding than the past. The accelerated deterioration of collections, only recently acknowledged, turns a difficult assignment into an impossible one under present circumstances. Unless new and extraordinary measures are devised and taken, the steady erosion of important collections, already begun, will quietly continue, and the possibility of accurately reconstructing important segments of public events and private accomplishments will slowly but inevitably decline.

Improving prospects for success will not come by shifting responsibility. Rather, enlisting new forms of help for those who are responsible is the most promising course of action. That help must be of a special kind: it must support without dominating; it must offer continuity of interest and participation; it must amplify skills and resources already at work and make present progress more visible; it must seek to strengthen existing capabilities and add new ones as needed; it must provide the sense of a common purpose that is essential to increasing financial support; and it must find ways to measure progress and promote efficiency. In short, a way must be found to add cohesion and force to existing efforts and aspirations.

To provide a structure that has these capabilities and, in addition, is able to adjust to changing needs and conditions, the Committee has encouraged the formation of two new bodies: a Commission on Preservation and Access and a National Advisory Council on Preservation, whose members will be designated by supporting organizations. The Commission, with appropriate staff support, must develop and carry out the plans and procedures that will enable libraries and preservation specialists to expand and integrate present preservation work. The Advisory Council is required to promote participation of all disciplines and to encourage support by involved and interested academic and professional organizations. It is also seen as an effective way to bring the interests and concerns of diverse groups into focus, thus providing general policy direction for the Commission itself.

*The Commission on Preservation and Access*

The success of the projected brittle books program rests with the Commission and its staff. The Commission will work on behalf of the libraries and organizations that must, in the end, do the work of preservation. Simultaneously, it must be an effective agent for all who will ultimately provide financial and intellectual support. In a sense, the Commission is seen as the matrix for this preservation activity, providing an ordered place for existing components and seeking to supply the elements required to fill the gaps.

The initial membership of the Commission will include some members from the original Committee and other individuals suggested by Committee members. Additional members may be enlisted by the Commission itself, which is expected to shape its own procedures, practices, and program, building on the conclusions of the founding Committee. For an initial period, the Council on Library Resources will provide a base for Commission operations. Funding for staff and Commission expenses for approximately three years will be required, after which time the Commission will be expected to have established financial and operating independence.

The Commission will be expected to:

1. Develop a funding plan for the preservation of brittle books and, with assistance from the Advisory Council, establish and develop a program to generate funds for use by participating libraries.

2. Establish the general conditions, policies, and procedures governing preservation work for the guidance of libraries, publishers, and other agencies interested in participating in the brittle books program.

3. Promote further development of a preservation information service by the Library of Congress and, especially, encourage the members of the Advisory Council to bring such information to the attention of their own organizations.

4. Encourage technical and other research on topics of importance to the brittle books program. Leadership of and cooperation among the national libraries and the National Archives seems especially critical in this area.

5. Establish a monitoring system to gather and analyze information about all aspects of preservation activity. Results of analytical work will help shape future methods and directions, will keep participants informed, and will be required in the preparation of reports to funding sources.

6. Monitor the performance of bibliographic systems to assure that information required to manage the preservation enterprise and to promote access to products is readily available.

7. Assure that access to preserved materials is efficient and supportive of research and scholarship. It is probable that existing practices and procedures will have to be modified as the quantity of available items increases.

8. Build and maintain effective communication with key organizations through the Advisory Council and promote participation in planning and operations by those institutions and individuals committed to the cause of preservation.

*The National Advisory Council on Preservation*

The Advisory Council should be affiliated with the Library of Congress. Its initial membership should include individuals designated by those library, archival, academic, and scholarly organizations with an interest in preservation. The Council, which is expected to set its own procedures and practices, may invite participation by additional organizations. The Advisory Council is intended to provide a link between organizations committed to preservation and the Preservation and Access Commission itself. The Council is expected to provide assistance to the Commission, and the Commission will make its work visible to supporting organizations through Council members.

The Advisory Council and its individual members will:

1. Inform members of their constituent organizations about preservation plans and operations.

2. Bring to the attention of the Commission the interests, concerns, and advice of their members.

3. Work in collaboration with the Commission to develop the procedures and activities required to support funding for preservation. The Council should seek to speak with one voice rather than many.

4. With guidance from the Commission, participate in long-range policy review.

5. Promote the objectives of preservation and conservation internationally.

## Funding

The projected cost of addressing the brittle books problem over the next twenty years cannot be accommodated in the operating budgets of libraries. If an extraordinary preservation program is to be established and maintained, extraordinary funding will be required. The Preservation and Access Committee was not charged with raising funds for preservation, but it did conclude that raising the amounts required, over an appropriate period of time, was possible. The elements essential to success include:

1. Leadership, expressed by a substantial commitment of funds by key research universities and far-sighted government bodies.
2. Provision of carefully targeted funds by private foundations to assure initial progress in the essential areas—e.g., organizational continuity, installation of prototype programs, public information activities, incentive funding.
3. A public commitment to preservation that will serve to support federal and state funding of the brittle books program in increasing amounts.
4. Eventual participation by research universities and research organizations.
5. Provision for preservation of future acquisitions in the operating budgets of libraries, archives, and other organizations to help assure that the problem we now face will be contained in time.
6. Constructive involvement of the publishing community and library service organizations, especially the segments concerned with scholarly publications and the distribution of text on demand.

Future funding must be built on the base that now exists and that has grown in important ways during recent years. The level of funding needs to grow gradually and in phase with program development, reaching a stable, sustainable, and adequate level (approximately $15 million annually) in perhaps five years.

The measure of success will be in the response to questions such as these:

Will universities be willing to separate the matter of funding a national brittle books program from the process of setting annual library operating budgets?

Will library directors, many of them with pressing budget problems, support institutional participation?

Will private foundations continue and even expand their support of preservation?

Will the federal government and state governments join forces with others to support the brittle books program?

Will the great majority of research institutions take part even though their own libraries might not seem to have a preservation problem? (Given the goal of equitable access to preserved materials, there can be no free ride.)

Will all funding sources encourage libraries and archives to "play by the rules" that will be advanced by the Commission?

The Preservation and Access Committee has not tried to find answers to these questions. Thoughtful discussion has created a sense of optimism that this difficult task can be done — perhaps not perfectly, but responsibly. There is full agreement that now is the time to try.

# *Forum III: A Summary Report*

Forum III was convened by the Committee on Preservation and Access. In addition to most members of the Committee, participants included representatives of organizations having an interest in preservation and several members of the new Commission on Preservation and Access that will continue the work of the Committee. Participants reviewed the work of the Committee, paying special attention to proposals for program management, funding, and the initial agenda of the Commission. The report of the Committee has been refined to incorporate certain recommendations of Forum III participants.

## General Observations

The Preservation and Access Committee, during its own discussions, gradually developed a set of assumptions and principles that formed the foundation for its recommendations. Forum III underscored the importance of many of these items.

- Responsibility for preservation is inseparable from the work of building and maintaining research collections. Collaboration among libraries in assuring the availability of unmatched research resources, nationally, implies collaboration in their preservation as well.
- While preservation, per se, is a valid goal, it is the prospect of providing wider and more equitable access to a growing collection of preserved material that fully justifies the cost and effort.
- Although items in all categories of recorded information deteriorate with time, realistic priorities must be established. The brittle books problem, large though it is, is one that can be defined and addressed with reasonable precision.
- The preservation of archival materials is a coordinate matter that must be attended to. Unlike books published in editions of many copies, archival material is, by definition, unique, so the prospect for sharing responsibility among archives for preservation of essentially discrete collections is less promising than it is for libraries. But there are many aspects of preservation both enterprises have in common, including the technology for preservation (microfilm, optical disk, deacidification, etc.), the need for effective bibliographic control, the objective of

equitable access, and the requirements for wider understanding of the need for preservation and for increased financial support.

- An absolute requirement for an expanding preservation program is the availability of bibliographic information pertinent to all aspects of preservation. This file of bibliographic and management information must be widely available and, ideally, it should be international in coverage.

## A National Program

Given the evidence of past progress and a realistic understanding of the nature of the work to be done, the participants agreed that this is the time to undertake a long-term, carefully planned effort to address the brittle book problem. The matter is one that will not go away and it is subject to a consistent and carefully designed program of action. Not to act will, in the final analysis, do irreparable harm to future generations.

The ultimate goal is to create an accessible national collection of preserved materials. It is not to reconstitute the present collection of every library. The manner in which the contents of brittle books are replicated and made available may greatly influence the future character of research libraries and the information services they provide. The projected preservation program brings with it an opportunity for libraries to refine their collection management policies, their operating methods, and the way they work together.

To accomplish the described work, the level of present production will have to be greatly increased and the work carefully coordinated to eliminate duplication of effort and to make the best possible use of available funds.

## Implementing the Program

Forum III participants considered in detail the recommendations advanced in the report of the Committee for direction and management of the brittle books program.

The projected Commission on Preservation and Access was endorsed as an appropriate and potentially strong managerial body. The magnitude of the assignment was underscored and the participants urged that funding requirements for three to five years of work not be underestimated. The addition to the Commission of additional individuals with specific abilities (financial planning, for example) was encouraged.

There was agreement on the agenda of the Commission, as outlined in the report. Specific attention was given to items requiring prompt attention, including staffing, initial funding, the need to identify and begin specific projects to establish credibility, and the need for an imaginative and extensive communication program.

The effective involvement of the concerned organizations that are critical to success was a thoroughly discussed topic. The draft report proposal for a Board of Sponsors was judged to be imprecise, and use of the name National Advisory Council on Preservation was recommended. (This change and the implied refinements in the role of that Council have been incorporated in the report of the Committee.)

It was noted that each organization to be represented on the Council would have to find its own way for constructive participation, since the nature and interests of those organizations vary greatly. Additional organizations for Council membership were suggested, and the evolutionary nature of the composition and role of the Council was acknowledged. The need for routine and detailed communication from the Commission to Council representatives was stressed.

## Funding and Incentives

There was agreement that the complete funding plan generally outlined in the report represented the only realistic approach. A long-term funding strategy will be required, and much Commission effort will have to be directed to developing financial support. Special attention will be required to describe in detail the incentives for institutional participation. The case for collaborative action by libraries and institutions that are financially committed to preservation is a strong one. Promoting financial participation by institutions with less of a commitment to preservation but with much to be gained over time through accessibility of preserved material will require specific attention.

These summary notes serve to confirm that Forum III participants made many useful suggestions and observations to the Committee. The detailed minutes of the meeting will be turned over to the Commission on Preservation and Access for use as the Commission begins its work. There was agreement that the chosen course is by and large the correct one. There was also a sense of impatience that work proceed without delay.

## Participants in Forum III
## Wye Plantation, March 19-21, 1986

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APPENDIX 1

# *Committee on Preservation and Access Interim Report*

Books printed on acidic paper and subjected to normal wear in library collections often show signs of irreversible deterioration in a few decades and eventually become useless. The paper in most books published, worldwide, for the past 125 years is acidic and the content of most of those books will become increasingly inaccessible unless their texts are reproduced. That task is the subject of this report.

Encouraged by library and academic organizations, the Council on Library Resources established the Committee on Preservation and Access during the fall of 1984. The members were asked to develop a realistic plan to preserve large quantities of library materials and to find ways to encourage action. The Committee has met three times thus far to consider the nature of the preservation problem, to assess present activity, and to determine needs and possible ways to meet them. Work has been concentrated on the specific matter of brittle books—those volumes that are already so deteriorated that their content soon must be copied or forever lost. There is an assumption that progress here will stimulate action on other categories of material as well.

This interim report from the Committee identifies the topics that have been, or soon will be, considered and sets forth conclusions reached to date. In the view of the members, success in dealing with the preservation problem will, in the end, be measured by the level and effectiveness of action by many individuals in many libraries. A "grand plan," if there ever is one, will probably be evident only in retrospect. Progress in preservation is made one book at a time. Many libraries, moving in concert, will, over time, do many books. "Moving in concert" is the heart of the problem and the focal point of the Committee's work.

The minutes of the three meetings of the full committee reflect the wide range of the discussions. Members have sought to learn more about the facts, conditions, and attitudes that will affect any expanded preservation program;

they have considered the results that might reasonably be expected; they have sought to identify the activities that must be undertaken to accomplish objectives; and they have considered matters related to production capabilities and program organization.

While the discussions continue, enough has been done to suggest several fundamental observations and conclusions.

*1. Access*

The Preservation and Access Committee began simply as the Preservation Committee, but it became apparent in the first discussion that access is the corollary of preservation. Any long-term preservation program will result in the creation of a "national collection" of preserved materials, i.e., a substantial and growing collection of master copies of items produced from deteriorated books selected for preservation because of their importance and available for replication for collections or personal use.

The cost of preserving a significant portion of those materials now unusable in research libraries will be justified only if access is enhanced. This implies effective bibliographic information about what has been preserved and a responsive system for securing copies of the texts themselves. The access system for a much expanded body of information may well become the prototype for new approaches to delivering library services with a bibliographic structure that, when appropriate, supports access as well as ownership.

*2. Magnitude of the preservation problem*

Studies conducted at the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, Stanford University, and Yale University have shown that approximately one-fourth of these collections are at risk, i.e., so embrittled that they will soon become useless. Additional research at the Library of Congress indicates that substantial numbers of books move into the "at risk" category yearly.

Dean Robert Hayes of UCLA examined the data from these and other studies to determine the magnitude of the problem for the nation's research libraries. In ARL libraries alone, with collections numbering 305 million volumes, approximately 75 million volumes are currently at risk. By subtracting the preservation work already being done by individual libraries and by factoring in such variables as overlap and numbers of materials moving into the "at risk" category each year, Dean Hayes estimated that in the next twenty years 3.3 million volumes of lasting importance must be converted to another form if their contents are to be saved.

The sheer quantity of work to be done is staggering, and the cost, estimated at nearly $400 million, inhibits action. The Committee is convinced, nonetheless, that the problem is tractable if it is broken into component parts and dealt with over time. Furthermore, beyond the practical considerations of how to proceed, the Committee's effort is based on the steadfast conclusion that preservation of the nation's intellectual heritage is essential and that research libraries have the obligation to carry out the work.

*3. Collaborative effort*

Knowing the dimensions of the problem leads to the conclusion that a collaborative effort is required. Many libraries are already engaged in preservation activities; many more understand the need. All libraries with a primary interest, regardless of network affiliations, must be involved. A national preservation strategy, if it is to be successful, must start with the premise that individual libraries are at the heart of the program. Thus, the strategy must set forth conditions and expectations in such a way that local decisions can be made in the context of a national plan. The strategy must not impede local decisions; rather, it should promote better-informed decisions.

It is only when a collaborative preservation program is accepted and acted on as a primary responsibility by research libraries and their universities that a "national collection" will become a reality. The collaborative nature of the work must extend to adherence to production and bibliographic standards and must include the creation of an access system for those items that are preserved. Only be joining forces can the job be accomplished. Institutions will benefit economically when they collaborate with others; each will serve its own ends at a reduced cost.

*4. Technology*

The Committee, first tempted by the promises of new technology, has concluded that, for the time being, preservation microfilming is the most reliable technique. A survey of the current state of video and optical disk technology applications in libraries suggested that it is too early to assume that disk technologies will solve the preservation problem, a conclusion that was further confirmed in the separate study of the magnitude and costs of preservation.

Every effort must be made to identify the most useful technology, to experiment where the prospects seem good, and to be prepared to take advantage of new and improved methods. Simultaneously, the microfilming process must be streamlined and costs reduced so that filming can go forward rapidly, even if it seems probable that alternative technology will replace microfilm before the present backlog of brittle books is copied.

*5. Public understanding*

Librarians have long been aware of preservation needs, but the magnitude of the problem is not generally understood by those who use and fund libraries. If the money required is to be forthcoming, faculty members, university administrators, boards of trustees, and government officials must be informed of the need and presented with carefully reasoned solutions.

Extraordinary means for capturing the attention of a wide and diverse audience must be found. Campus seminars, documentary films, and involvement of such organizations as the Advertising Council are but a few suggestions of the Preservation and Access Committee. Many other approaches need to be tested and used during the months and years ahead.

*6. Systematic approach*

The magnitude of the problem and the importance of the outcome suggest the need for a careful, systematic approach to preservation. The Committee seeks to present a comprehensive picture, not only of the ultimate plan, but also of the series of steps required to achieve the plan. Progress must be made and measured in stages.

If libraries have the will to do so, there are remarkable opportunities within preservation to experiment with new methods and new affiliations. In the final analysis, the ability to preserve deteriorated books and to make the copies widely accessible may serve as a kind of model for the "new" library that takes full advantage of technological possibilities.

## Continuing Activities

The Committee is scheduled to complete its work early in 1986. A final report will be issued at that time and, if present aspirations are realized, a way will have been found to encourage expansion and coordination of preservation activity in the context of generally accepted principles and objectives. To reach that goal, the Committee will give special attention to three types of activity.

*1. Expanding the discussion*

Members of the Committee, through their own work and their affiliations, reflect the concerns and interests of library, university, and public administrations; preservation specialists; and a variety of disciplines from the world of scholarship. Each member has, in her or his own way, described and amplified the work of the Committee to an extended audience. The publication and distribution of this Interim Report carries that process a further step,

one meant to expand the opportunities for even more individuals and organizations to contribute to the undertaking.

Discussions projected for the next several months will encourage university trustees, state legislators, foundations, federal officials, and an increasing number of university librarians, faculty members, and academic administrative officers to consider ways in which they might advance the cause. The Committee is agreed that those who are concerned with preserving our intellectual heritage must speak with one voice if funding and participation are to reach required levels.

*2. Additional fact finding and planning*

Reports and analytical studies on several topics have been prepared for the Committee, but additional information is required. During the next few months, studies will be conducted for the Committee on several facets of the preservation issue.

- The process of setting preservation priorities

  Assuming that selectivity will be required, ways to identify categories of material for filming need to be devised and tested. Priorities need to be determined for each discipline or subject field, a strategy for applying those priorities needs to be developed, and a review process—one that involves the academic disciplines as well as library subject specialists—needs to be established. A small group of scholars and librarians will work with the Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology of the American Council of Learned Societies to explore these matters.

- The bibliographic record system

  There are two requirements for the preservation bibliographic system: it must provide information needed to "manage" preservation activity and it must identify and locate master copies of preserved items. Elements of the bibliographic structure needed to accomplish both objectives exist, but they are not universally available and the machine-readable records for existing masters are far from complete. If libraries are to integrate their preservation work, they must all have access to the same information concerning work under way or planned. If master copies of preserved text (the product of preservation work) are to be available to all who need them, the record must be complete and readily available.

  A careful analysis of the present situation, including determination of the number of records to be converted to machine-readable form and an exploration of prospects for bringing elements of the required system

together into a cohesive whole, are under way by CLR staff. With constructive help from several organizations, it should be possible to develop the necessary bibliographic foundation for a national preservation program by the time the Committee completes its work.

- Access to preserved materials

Very early in its discussions, the Committee agreed that *access* to preserved materials was an issue no less important than preservation itself. The present, relatively low level of filming does not require much in the way of organization to obtain copies for use. The process is essentially that of interlibrary loan, with added delays for making the requested copy from the master. But a much expanded preservation program and a truly effective bibliographic system for identification and location may very well create new problems — increased fulfillment costs for libraries supplying copies from their masters and increased delays and procedural confusion for users.

The matter of access will be explored for the Committee during the next few months. A preliminary report will consider such questions as these:

a. How do librarians and users of libraries identify and locate master negatives?
b. How easy or difficult is it to obtain copies of microfilms, once located?
c. Is there a need for consolidation of distribution activities? If so, what approach would best serve users?
d. Are there existing bodies that might meet needs?
e. What economic issues need attention?

- The costs of preservation

The unit cost of preservation filming is high, which by itself forces selectivity. Even so, the sheer number of brittle books that should be copied is so large that every possible approach to reduce costs needs to be explored. The poor condition of many books and the need for page-by-page copying (no matter which technology is used) make the process labor intensive. Costs are a function of the number of steps and time required, from initial selection to final action. Some cost information exists and a study will be commissioned to review all aspects of the preservation process to learn whether and under what conditions savings can be achieved without introducing unacceptable reductions in quality.

With a careful assessment of present costs in hand, an economic analysis of the preservation system — including use of alternate technologies, evaluation of commercial operations, and cost implications of

various organizational approaches — will be undertaken. Some preliminary work to gather together existing information is under way.

*3. Organization for preservation*

The organization and management of a much-expanded program of brittle books preservation is a topic that has permeated Committee discussions from the beginning but has been left unresolved until the end, simply because it is sensible to establish *what* needs to be done before considering how best to do it. There are already many libraries and organizations at work on one aspect or another of the preservation "problem." Acknowledging present activity and recognizing that, ultimately, the volume of work must increase greatly, the question becomes one of what needs to be done that is not now being done and cannot be accomplished with existing operating bodies.

The discussion is not nearly over, but at least four specific matters seem to need additional attention.

- Funding a preservation program over a ten-year (or even twenty-year) period will require concentrated attention and persistence. Government, private foundations, and institutions will all have to take part in providing the funds for the libraries and organizations that will do the work in the context of national objectives and accepted procedures. Something more in the way of effort and organization is needed to promote funding at the required levels.

- Despite much activity in many different settings, there is as yet little sense of a "national program." With only a few exceptions, goals are largely institutional. A way must be found to establish a credible national setting for preservation activities, one that will enable individual libraries to coordinate their own work with that going on elsewhere. The need for a national "backdrop" for preservation work will grow with the volume of activity.

- It is probable that, despite the growing number of libraries and organizations now involved in at least some aspects of preservation, there are still important matters not being addressed. Development of a more effective approach to providing access to materials or an expanded research effort are examples. There is a need to assure that essential operating components are brought into being as they are needed.

- An essential element in a program of the magnitude being projected is the capacity to monitor results. Cost control, production levels, and availability of the final product must all be watched to assure that results match promises to funders. As important is the critical assessment of procedures and results by the scholarly community, administrators of universities, and government leaders. A constructive approach to judg-

ing progress must be found to satisfy obligations to funding sources and participants alike.

These elements of an agenda are generally accepted. Further, there is a conviction that a sophisticated system for providing information about preservation processes and activity for use by all who are concerned is required. The expanding efforts of the Library of Congress in this area are of great importance.

The Preservation and Access Committee will finish its work by assessing organizational requirements and proposing a way to meet them. For all the reasons noted in this Interim Report and from the point of view of responsible management, a collaborative effort is essential. The question being considered is "What is the form and what are the characteristics of the organization most likely to assure a successful preservation program?"

Models for solving the organizational and operational problems inherent in national undertakings range from those that simply "advise and assist" on the one extreme to those assigned full operating responsibility for extensive programs on the other. This, like most other topics related to fundamental social and educational issues, must be dealt with in a setting of differing priorities and concerns, a long and important tradition of institutional autonomy, and complex economic factors.

In the final analysis, any successful organization must deal effectively with the need to shape and maintain consensus on key matters, to stimulate necessary funding, and to assess and even insist on progress toward accepted goals. The organization — more accurately, its individual members — must have the political acumen required to build and sustain the support of each constituency: university administrators, faculty, librarians, the appropriate commercial sectors, and government. The final report of the Committee will reflect the judgment of its members on this fundamental matter.

APPENDIX 2

# *Committee on Preservation and Access Background Studies*

The Preservation and Access Committee considered many issues during the course of its work, some of which stimulated preparation of discussion briefs or research reports. While none of the papers produced for the Committee is available, this record will give some indication of topics that were discussed.

*Book Longevity:* Reports of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity. Washington, D.C., Council on Library Resources, 1982.

These reports were important sources of information for the Preservation and Access Committee as it began its deliberations. The *Report on Book Paper* contains recommendations related to production and use of acid-free paper, and it includes technical information that characterizes permanent papers. *On Longevity in Book Binding* concerns binding durability, longevity, usability, and repairability.

Analysis of the Magnitude, Costs, and Benefits of the Preservation of Research Library Books

This report characterizes the variables of the problem with respect to magnitudes, costs, and benefits; assembles the available data into a coherent summary in the context of those variables; provides estimates and assumed values for relevant parameters based on the data; identifies the gaps and weaknesses in the available data and the means by which they may be corrected; and proposes research activities needed to effect those corrections.

The study is currently being refined through on-site data collection at selected ARL libraries. The data will be used to study overlap among collections, costs of processing, and projected benefits. The findings will help make the parameters of the preservation problem more reliable, consistent, and precise and will be important for long-term planning and funding for preservation.

Scholars and the Preservation Problem

This examination of scholars' concerns relating to the preservation of library materials focuses on what is at stake, the potential for participation by scholars in a national program, and behavioral issues.

Selection and Appraisal for Preservation

General procedures for the selection and appraisal of materials to be preserved in their original and secondary formats are considered.

Legal and Proprietary Concerns

Ownership, proprietary rights, and compensation issues that will affect both the private sector and the scholarly community are presented.

Saving Books: The Acid Test of a Civilization

This paper suggests initiatives that might be taken to develop national awareness of the paper deterioration problem and its potential solution. Recommendations are given for mounting a national educational campaign; enlisting the help of university administrators, scholars, librarians, archivists, government officials, and legislators; building a national network of vocal supporters; developing funding sources; and lobbying.

Organization and Management of the Brittle Books Program

Five primary topics that must be considered in shaping an appropriate management approach to an extensive preservation program for brittle books are identified. They are: 1) facts, conditions, and attitudes that will shape the initial program, 2) required results of the program, 3) activities that must be undertaken to accomplish goals, 4) identification of agents and participants, and 5) communication links required to transform independent activities into an operating system.

The Management of Preservation Information

Preservation programs, local and national, require information management systems linking preservation data to related bibliographic data to provide a record of those items that have been preserved, items to be preserved in the future, and treatment method used or anticipated. This paper presents current national reporting efforts and requirements for a national preservation information system.

Physical Access to Microform Masters of Preserved Materials

Six librarians were commissioned to write papers on the issue of physical access to microfilm masters. On the assumption that an accelerated program of preservation microfilming would result in a large increase in microform masters and copies, they describe their views of the most pressing problems related to access and suggest possible ways of addressing them.

Access to Microform Masters of Preserved Titles: The Bibliographic Record

This paper summarizes the findings of a poll of the bibliographic utilities and the Library of Congress to determine what, if anything, should be done to assure bibliographic access to microfilm masters of preserved titles. It was concluded that the elements appear to be in place for a logical, consistent file of bibliographic records representing the microform masters held in this country and abroad.

The Role of Scholars in the Preservation of Library Resources: Report of the Subcommittee to the Preservation and Access Committee

The report summarizes a meeting of scholars, librarians, preservation specialists, and administrators to discuss how scholars might best contribute to a preservation program through their involvement in setting priorities for selecting materials to be preserved. Two models for selection are presented.

Preservation and Access: Assuring Future Progress

The subject of this paper is the organizational structure required to maintain continuity of effort for preservation. A proposal for a new Commission on Preservation and Access is outlined along with an initial agenda of activities.

Study of Preservation Microfilming Costs

This project, currently in progress, involves a study of preservation microfilming costs at four libraries, which were chosen on the basis of their different approaches to filming. Attention will be given to cost determination and job design — including work flow, forms design, and shop layout — to identify factors adding unnecessarily to the cost. Problems of quality control and economy will also be taken into consideration.